

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel GCE
Religious Studies 6RS02 Investigations-
Paper 1E
The Study of the Old Testament –
Jewish Bible

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AREA 1E Old Testament

Introduction

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2015 examination season was another very successful season for candidates who presented inspirational studies in the Investigations Paper. The quality of candidates' work is a testimony to the high level of engagement with selected studies drawn from a very wide range of academic fields. The high standard of work evidenced in June 2015 was no exception to historical high standards as candidates demonstrated a very high level of independent enquiry which clearly demonstrated what their chosen area of investigation had meant to them as a learning experience. Candidates showcased their knowledge of a particular academic field in the way they identified a line of enquiry, clearly expressed their view, analysed key concepts and deployed evidence with coherent understanding of their task whilst fluently evaluating a wide range of source material that they had at their disposal. The enthusiasm for and knowledge of the chosen topic was clearly conveyed in many answers that were truly academic in their approach. A few centres continue to focus on the same or similar topics for all their candidates, whereas other Centres permitted considerable choice for individual candidates. Candidates were mostly very well prepared for the examination and it was evident that Centres used their specialist resources and interests to encourage candidates to research in depth a particular area of study. It is important to stress again that the 'Investigations' unit has a definite academic purpose. The aim is to involve students as active participants pursuing open-ended enquiries with an emphasis on independent learning. Questions were designed to be inclusive of all possible approaches to various topics and all valid answers were considered. At this stage in the life of the specification it is difficult to find new things to report because, in the main, centres possess a very high degree of expertise and this is clearly evidenced in the work that is produced on the day of the examination.

There are still a few areas for development that are reported similarly each year and once again 2015 showed evidence of a small minority of centres that need to take this on board. Centres are encouraged to review their performance in 2015 against all or some of the following points:

Whilst most centres had entered their candidates for the correct option there were still a few entries for particular Areas of Study where consideration regarding entry for a different Area of Study may have been beneficial to the candidate. It is important to ensure candidates know which area of their investigation is the best fit for the question they answer on the paper.

There was evidence of candidates choosing a different question on the paper to the question they had clearly prepared for before the examination. In some of these cases the candidate was using material suitable for Question 1 to answer Question 3 (or vice versa) and not really grappling fully with the demands of the question. This practice does not always work to the best effect as the candidate might end up answering neither question as fully as possible.

It must be noted that each question was written for ONE of three topics within each particular Area of Study. Candidates were not penalised if correct entries were not made or a cross was put in a box that did not match the answer or if no box was ticked at all. However, evidence shows that candidates have decided that the question for a topic that they clearly had not prepared for looked more inviting and selected that question but that did not necessarily mean they were best prepared to answer that question. Whilst it is good to note that less candidates than 2014 attempted this approach there were still some candidates in this session who answered a question they had not prepared for and may need to be reminded which question their material is best directed at and be advised to answer that question. Examiners were encouraged to mark positively and to credit all valid material according to the mark scheme and question paper. Centres should ensure that candidates are entered for the option that matches their Area of Study and that candidates are clear about which question they have been prepared for on the paper. There is still evidence of Centres studying Papers 1B and 1F being entered for 1A. This might be an oversight regarding filling out the form – Centres must choose 6RS02 and then identify which of the seven papers from 1A to 1G is the specific entry.

Variation in achievement was related to the two assessment objectives. These objectives should receive prominent attention in the process of the investigation. Importantly there must be explicit attention to both objectives in the examination answer and also to the question that is intended to focus the answer. Each question consistently referred to the assessment objectives with the trigger word 'Examine' for AO1 and 'Comment on' for AO2. These dictated the structure of the question and helped candidates to plan their answers. It would be advisable for candidates to pay regular attention to the level descriptors for these assessment objectives as a way of monitoring their development and progress during their investigations. The phrase 'with reference to the topic you have investigated' will always appear in the question to ensure that the generic question can be answered with material from any appropriate investigation. The mark scheme itself is generic to all questions but the answer itself is not necessarily generic as candidates are expected to use their material to answer the question. The purpose of the question is to challenge candidates to adapt their material so that at the highest levels they may demonstrate a coherent understanding of the task based on the selection of their material. Widely deployed evidence/arguments/sources were evident in well structured responses to the task whereby a clearly expressed viewpoint was supported by well-deployed evidence and reasoned argument. There was skilful deployment of religious language in many answers and the fluency of good essays showed command over the material; such command makes for high outcomes and rewards the amount of hard work done by the candidate. Many candidates had clearly learned much in the process and their overall grasp of the issues involved and command over their material was highly commendable.

Candidates at the lower end of achievement struggled with the demands of the question. In preparation for this examination some candidates may find it useful to write up their investigation under exam timed conditions to a variety of different possible questions. They might build up a number of different essay plans to different possible questions. The important point in these

activities is to enable candidates to develop their management of material such as how to best structure their content to answer the specific question. However, success can be undermined by writing up a rote-learned answer which was not adapted to the question set or by answering a question that has been written for a topic they have not studied. In 2015 there was still far too much evidence of rote learned answers using the same structure and material inclusive of quotes; whilst much information was relevant to the topic and consequently was awarded in terms of AO1, there was a significant lack of engagement with the specific demands of the question and consequently marks for AO2 were low, with only generic evaluation provided. This approach is contrasted with another form where candidates were trained to answer the question; arguably, this is evidence of good practice but at the lower end some candidates thought it was sufficient to simply use the question stimulus at the end of each paragraph. The best answers were those which were guided by the statement as opposed to simply '*tagging it on*' to content that they were already anticipating to write about. A balanced approach to the question that meets the highest levels of achievement according to both assessment objectives is obviously desirable and the generic question accommodates many possible routes to success whereby any valid approach to the question was credited.

Finally, there is increasing evidence of poorly written scripts that are almost illegible – scripts are scanned onto software for marking and even though the examiner can enlarge the screen many scripts were still very difficult to read. Candidates are strongly advised to develop their practical handwriting skills and then practice writing under timed conditions. Candidates who cannot achieve legible writing may need to consider accessing the facility for word processing their answers according to the regulations. Centres are assured that much time was invested in attempting to decipher illegible answers but there is always the risk that a badly written word/phrase/paragraph could be misinterpreted and it is best to avoid the chances of this occurring. Examiners understand the time constraints that candidates are writing under but this problem regarding illegible handwriting seems to be on the increase. Centres need to address this issue because the current format for examinations requires candidates' ability to sustain handwriting and academic standards under examination pressure.

That said, the excellent work of centres and candidates in 6RS02 bears testimony to the academic potential of candidates that is a joy to behold when it is fully realised.

Specific Comments - Area 1E - The Study of the Old Testament/Jewish Bible

It would be good to see more entries for this paper as the Old Testament had the fewest candidates of all the 6RS02 options. It is evident that candidates engage enthusiastically with this unit as there were some very insightful and detailed studies.

Question 1 - Religion and Science

The take up for this question remains rather low and this seems a shame because the potential of this topic is not really explored by many candidates. Candidates appear to fear discussing with confidence how the study of the interface between religion and science might have real relevance for the study of the Old Testament. There is scope for examining the historical interaction between religion and science by focussing on the dialogue between Christianity and the natural sciences. The Old Testament provides rich material for the application of natural science, for example, in the creation narratives, miracles or prophecy. Very few candidates addressed, for example, how the Christian doctrine of creation could be explored by examining scientific explanations for the origins of the universe. The best candidates were able to discuss the creation and evolution debate in detail; other candidates extrapolated a relationship between the design argument and the Old Testament. Origins of the universe in the Old Testament were contrasted by some candidates against scientific discovery. The focus of the question was missed by a few who were unable to comment on the claim the religion and science answer different questions. The best answers adapted their material to the question, or set up their approach clearly with reference to the question. In the best essays the issues were firmly located within contemporary scholarship from within the religion and science debate and coupled with appropriate knowledge of Old Testament scholarship. Overall there was an excellent selection of material drawn from the Old Testament that supported very good essays but in some cases responses were weaker on the distinctive discipline of science. The best candidates were well versed in the debate from a scientific and religious perspective and were up to date with their account of it. There was good analysis of key terms and drawing out of their significance.

Weaker candidates generally struggled to relate issues within the religion and science debate to a study of the Old Testament. Some candidates were rather one-sided in their approach to the religion and science debate and opportunities to refer to the Old Testament narratives were generally missed. Scholarship in the Old Testament is extensive and is best deployed with the relevant textual extract from which the theological issues emerge; good candidates had no difficulty handling their material with this point in mind. There were a few scripts that might have fared better if they were entered for 1A Q1 because it appeared that in-depth knowledge of the Old Testament was not so secure. A few candidates managed to move beyond a purely Dawkinian critique towards a balanced reflection on the question but would have benefitted from the inclusion of commentary from other, more well known, Old Testament scholars. It is also worth noting whilst any point of

view can be argued for it is important to be able to substantiate an individual view with balanced knowledge of both sides of the debate.

It is a shame that entries for this question is very low as the potential for interesting work exploring the issues is left largely untapped.

Question 2 - The Nature of God

This question was very well done. This question provides scope for examining the Old Testament in order to understand the nature of God. Some excellent responses navigated a wide range of different Old Testament literature and explored in detail the significance of these for understanding our relationship with God. Candidates offered a range of convincing views about the nature of God that were coupled with solid exegesis of the biblical text and appropriate scholarship. Candidates answered this question with a high level of insight and were well equipped to examine the many valid interpretations of God whilst backing up their views with a wide range of contrasting biblical quotations, both from the Law and the Prophets. The various attributes of God were understood in detail and discussed through the use of scholarly opinion backed up by the Prophets and the Psalms. Evaluation was interesting and varied in approach, from the evangelistic notions of God's embracing agape love, through pre-destination, heaven and hell to philosophical notions of free will and epistemic distance.

In the mid-range, similar to last year, there was much evidence of Dawkins' analysis of the psychotic nature of God at the expense of reference to classical Old Testament scholarship. Dawkins was too often quoted as an Old Testament scholar whilst negative issues about God were discussed in a polarised fashion. More scholarly analysis would have added a qualitatively academic edge to the discussion. At the lower end of achievement candidates concentrated on re-telling Bible stories with little scholarly analysis; or alternatively candidates in this range had little knowledge of the Old Testament.

Throughout the Old Testament we experience many different aspects of God's nature, the noticeable being God as Creator, Father, Lawgiver, Punisher and Destroyer. God's name, YHWH, is a form of the verb 'to be' meaning 'he who causes to be' in the traditional vocalisation. This is also his most frequent designation, occurring over 6,800 times in the Old Testament. In Genesis 1, however, God is referred to as 'Elohim' the plural of 'Eloah' which is a generic ~~name~~^{term} for God, rather than a name. ~~In Genesis two accounts of the~~ In Exodus 3:14 God says to Moses 'I am the one who is' emphasising who he is rather than what he does. However, evidence to support this interpretation as Creator can be found in Genesis where two accounts of the creation are put forward, clearly demonstrating a large aspect of his nature. In Genesis 1:3 it says 'Then God said "let there be light" and there was light", also highlighting

his omnipotence as well as ~~his~~ portraying him as Creator. This is reiterated in verse 9 as it says "And God said "let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place and let the dry land appear" and it was so'. Here God's omnipotence is shown as the creation takes place through a divine fulfillment of God's word. John Scullion comments that "God's word is fulfilled in an event immediately following... God's word is event; what God has said must come to pass. However, in Chapter 2, 'YHWH' differs from the anonymous God which can be witnessed in the first account, as he is shown to have a more personal relationship with his creations, as Jack Miles points out that "The Lord God seems noticeably more anxious in confrontation with his creature ~~•~~ than ~~•~~ God seemed in the first". This is demonstrated in Genesis 2:7 where it says "Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." This nature is reiterated in verse 21-22 where it states "He took one of the ribs and closed up its place with flesh, and the rib that the

Lord God took from the man he made into a woman'. As well as clearly portraying God as creator, God is shown to act like Father who cares for his people. God's ability to do this also shows him to be "the omnipotent God" as stated in the Encyclopedia Judaica. ~~God also asserts his authority over~~ This contributes to the far more tactile approach God takes as he himself fashions man from the dust of the ground, contrasting to Genesis 1. God also asserts his authority over man as it states in Genesis 2:16, 'Then the Lord God commanded the man' showing his authority over humans and his position as creator, and also lawgiver. However, it is not until later in the Old Testament that it is evident that God created the world out of nothing, as is the case in Job. Israel Abrahams comments that "Job appears to express poetically the belief in a world made out of the void". This is shown to be true as it is stated in Job 26:7 that 'he stretches out the north over the void and hangs the earth upon nothing' clearly demonstrating his omnipotence and nature as creator. This is reiterated in

Job 38:4 where God asks 'where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth'. This ~~to~~ verses highlight the fundamental beliefs of both Christianity and Judaism, that God created the world out of nothing, arguably a key element to his principal nature in the Old Testament.

This aspect of God's nature displayed throughout the Old Testament backs up that of God being Father. Gail O'Day and Peter Davidson state in the Theological Bible Commentary that "the ongoing well-being of the community is significantly related to the ongoing presence of YHWH", thus indicated the Father-like impact that God holds upon his people, a key aspect of his nature. This is demonstrated in the Old Testament, ~~to~~ first in Genesis, as it is stated in ~~Gen~~ 1:29: "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of the earth, and every tree that has seed in its fruit, you shall have them for food". Here God is shown to provide for his people and express an almost Father-like love towards them. God does not only provide Adam and Eve with a garden of Paradise in

which to live but gives them everything they need in order to live well there, as demonstrated in Genesis 3:21; 'the Lord God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and he clothed them'. It is ~~also~~ also worth pointing out that God provided a spouse for his creation, an example of his love and Father-like care. However, ~~we~~ it is expressed most clearly that God is seen as a Father later in the Old Testament, as in 2 Samuel 7:14 the Lord God says of King David 'I will be a Father to him and he shall be a son to me' clearly stated his authority over humans. This is ~~ret~~ reiterated ~~it~~ by Moses in Exodus 32:6 where he says 'Is he not your Father, who created you, who made you and established you', again showing him to be both Creator and Father. A key feature of understanding God as Father is noticing his role as Lawgiver, similar to the role of any other Father. God can be ~~seen~~ seen as Lawgiver throughout the Old Testament firstly in Genesis where God again asserts his authority over humans by telling Adam and Eve that "you may freely eat of any tree

of the Garden, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat" (Genesis 2:16-17). God's role as lawgiver is reiterated in Exodus 19:5 where it states "now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant then out of all the nations you will be my treasured possession". This demonstrates God's assertive authority, yet also also portrays him in a Father-like light as he is rewarding his people for doing good and obey his commands. We also see God caring for his people as he protects the Israelites in the wilderness as Jack Miles comments on how "The Lord God of Israel provides food for the chronically complaining Israelites and defends them against the attacking Amalekites" thus demonstrating God has the ability to not only care for his people but guides them through his commandments, as shown in Exodus 19:5. Although it was traditionally thought that all 615 commandments were received ~~by Moses on Mount Sinai~~, it was only the 10 commandments that were received by Moses on Mount Sinai. A key commandment relates to monotheism, "you shall have no other gods beside me" which relates to the

~~The~~ line "I am the Lord, there is no other" which is repeated throughout Deutero-Isaiah. John Sullivan comments that "it is Deutero-Isaiah who expresses most clearly that God is one and unique, in short, monotheism in the strict sense" thus demonstrating God's nature as Lawgiver as he is forbidding the worship of any other God. However ~~God's~~ test, in Exodus 32:1, Aaron and Isaac attempt to "make us gods which shall go before us" thus disobeying God's commandment. Richard Dawkins refers to this as the reason for "God's jealous sulk" as he ~~shows~~ reinforces his nature as lawgiver by punishing his people through Moses. Dawkins also comments on how "he lost no time in dispatching Moses as his enforcer" also showing his omnipotence and nature as Father as he punishes as a teaching method. It is stated in Exodus 32:27 that God "commands everyone of you to put on his sword and go through the camp from this gate to the next and kill his brothers, his friends and his neighbours". Although, here God acts through his people he is highlighting his authority and revealing his assertive

nature to his people. Dawkins sees his actions as "God's marital jealousy" as he orders this as a consequence for their attempt to make a golden calf. We also see God's use of laws and punishments in Proverbs as he rewards those who do good in an attempt to prevent them from doing evil as he uses punishment as a teaching method, much like a Father would.

It is stated in Proverbs 12:2 that "he is pleased with good people but condemns those who plan evil" showing ~~how~~ his nature as Lawgiver and Father. This is reiterated in Proverbs 12:7 where it says that "the wicked meet their downfall and leave no descendants, but the families of the righteous live on". ~~God~~

God's nature as Lawgiver also reflects aspects of God's as a Punisher and Destroyer. Jack Miles highlights God's malevolent nature by saying that "under either of his principal names the Creator has proven to us that he has the capacity to be a destroyer". ~~However God's nature as Destroyer~~ This is evidently true as God's creations which he cares so much for in Genesis, he ~~know~~

punishes because they disobeyed them, showing his nature throughout the Old Testament to be controversial. God's nature as Punisher is first seen in Genesis 3:16 as a punishment for Adam and Eve not obeying his command to not eat the fruit of the tree of good and evil knowledge of good and evil, it is said that "I ~~will~~ shall increase your pangs in childbearing, in pain you shall bring forth children". God then goes on to tell Adam that "cursed is the ground before you, in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life" (Genesis 3:17). Here God is blatantly punishing for them disobeying him, again showing us his different aspects of his nature, such as ~~part~~ of Punisher and Lawgiver. Later in the Old Testament in Exodus 12:12, it is stated "For I will pass through the land of Egypt and I will strike down ~~to~~ every first born in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals, every thing that is on the earth shall die. ~~Here we see a punishment~~ These threats clearly portray God as both Punisher and Destroyer, contrasting to the Father-like love he

displayed for his people in Genesis. Similarly, in Ezekiel 9:18, God says "I will act in wrath, my eye shall not spare, nor will I have pity, and although they cry in my hearing in a loud voice, I will not listen to them" showing him to be deliberately causing suffering and neglecting his people whom he cared for and protected previously, such as when he protected the Israelites against "the attacking Amalukites" (Talk Miles). However, it is also in Genesis when we see most clearly God acting as a destroyer ~~in~~, as in Genesis 6:17 he says "For my part, I am going to bring a flood of water ~~to~~ to the earth and destroy from under heaven all flesh in which breathes the breath of life. Everything that is on the earth shall die". Here we witness a previously unseen aspect to God's nature, greatly contrasting to earlier in Genesis where instead of God simply ~~be~~ bringing pain to one or two people for disobeying him, he is threatening to take the lives of innocent people all across the land, ~~the~~ clearly backing up Miles' previous statement. Richard Dawkins

comments that "God took a dim view to human beings so he (with the exception of one family) drowned the lot of them" making it ~~hard~~ hard for us to see the omnibenevolent God that can be witnessed in other parts of the Old Testament, however. T Cress disagrees with Darwin saying that "God's relation to mankind is not comparable with our relations to each other" suggesting that "God knows best, whether by natural or miraculous means" (Cress) and that suffering may be seen as necessary in order for the world to know good. This is an effective way to look at it as it allows for God's nature as destroyer whilst still acknowledging his nature of both Creator and Father elsewhere in the Old Testament.

Throughout the Old Testament, God has proven ~~to~~ that he has the ability to be Creator and Father, as seen in Genesis, yet also, Lawgiver, punisher and destroyer, shown in stories such as Noah and the Flood. Through these different

aspects of his nature we see how his relationship with ~~the~~ his people has developed ~~and~~ and how he has gradually revealed to the Israelites his nature.

W. Bruggenhein comments that throughout the Old Testament "God's identity is revealed in all its mystery, holiness and burning righteousness".

The candidate in this 11¼ page essay demonstrated coherent understanding of the task; based on selection of material to demonstrate emphasis and clarity of ideas. This was a well-structured, fluent response to the task that was expressed cogently through skilful deployment of religious language. The argument was substantiated and clearly reasoned. The candidate was knowledgeable of the Old Testament and included a substantial range of biblical material and biblical scholarship. Every page is packed with different material and the conclusion ends with a quote from Bruggenhein that makes the final point very well. A very impressive piece of work that shows exemplary control over the topic.

Question 3 - Job and The Problem Of Evil And Suffering

By far, this question was the most popular with most candidates handling it really well and 2015 was no exception. Candidates were able to examine the Book of Job skilfully, with clarity and coherence; candidates discussed its relationship to the problem of evil and suffering by comparative analysis of textual narratives in the Book of Job and from elsewhere in the Old Testament, most notably the Genesis myths. The best candidates had secure knowledge of the Book of Job and scholarship specific to the Book of Job such as C.S.Rodd and biblical commentary. They were also familiar with a range of other well known Old Testament scholars. Candidates really did explore issues deeply within this question, and most answers were full of scholarship, good learning and interesting evaluation.

Effective use was made of material which candidates had studied in 6RS01 such as the Problem of Evil, but some centres adopted an approach that was over reliant on a model answer. Similar structure, similar introductions with the same quotes may lead to a constraining of natural and nurtured ability of candidates to produce something that is closer to the spirit of the Investigations paper that allows for something original and independent. Candidates are required to make their own response to the material studied

and this is not always apparent when they arrive at similar conclusions using the same quotes. Some weaker answers relied on 'Problem of Evil and Theodicy' type approaches without demonstrating any further knowledge of the Old Testament. This raises the question as to why candidates are not prepared for a different paper for which they might have more distinctive knowledge. It must be stressed again that the demands of the Investigations Paper are different to the Foundations Paper and this particular question is not exclusively about the problem of evil. Candidates must demonstrate secure knowledge of the Book of Job to secure higher levels of achievement. Many candidates examined solutions to the problem of evil, particularly the Augustinian and Irenaean Theodicies, but not so many used this material effectively to comment on the Book of Job. Some weaker candidates re-told the Job narratives and then wrote about philosophical notions, but were unable to relate the two in a very meaningful way. Some candidates tended to concentrate on the philosophical arguments concerning suffering and tended to use Job as an example (or an after-thought) – this results in some uneven answers. This question demands detailed knowledge of the Book of Job and achievement is directly related to a working knowledge of this material. It is insufficient to present an outline of the problem of evil that is not applied directly to the Book of Job because the purpose of this topic is to study the Book of Job.

The following response is another good example of competent scholarship coupled with fluent knowledge of the Old Testament. The candidate has very secure knowledge of Jewish theology and exploits this to the full in this piece of work. Many candidates in the lower ranges do not display knowledge of the Book of Job itself and tend to rely on material drawn from the problem of evil debate that remains largely unsubstantiated from within this area of study. The essay below demonstrates very clearly actual knowledge of the Book of Job and the issues related to the question are thoroughly discussed. The standard of this piece of work is high and serves to illustrate what can be achieved by hard working candidates who clearly have researched in detail their topic.

The topic being examined in this essay is the Jewish response to evil and suffering and the ~~classical~~ debate whether the book of Job provides an answer to the problem of suffering. Does Judaism provide an answer to the ongoing question of how an Omnipotent and Omnibenevolent G-d can exist simultaneously with evil and suffering? How far does the book of Job provide a convincing argument to this ~~seem~~ seeming contradiction?

To respond to this I will examine the story of the book of Job and understand what happened to him. Job was a prosperous and wealthy man, surrounded by his wife and children, and also a man of extreme belief in G-d. G-d praised Job for his worthiness until the Satan, which Chassidic philosophy describes as G-d's attribute of severity, accused Job, claiming that "if Job didn't have all his fortune he would not still be righteous". So G-d tests Job by taking away his fortune, his children and inflicting many tragedies upon him. Job accepts everything from G-d until the last test when he is struck with a terrible

skin disease. Then Job's friends come to visit him: they hear about his suffering and each in their own way try to console him and explain why he deserved this pain. However, their perspectives only cause Job to almost lose his faith in G-d.

G-d ^{then} tells Job that no human mind can fathom his ways, nor adequately justify his actions. Job realises he made a mistake in questioning G-d and accepts all his suffering, consequently strengthening his relationship with G-d. G-d rewards Job by giving him back his wealth in a double measure.

There are many opinions as to where and when the book of Job took place. He came from the location of "Uz", an unclear location which cannot be found on the map, however the Hebrew word means a 'deep argument' which suggests of an emotional and intellectual search for truth.

Job's ~~to~~ unclear identity allows us to see him as a timeless and universal figure.

In addition, the redundant expression of "a day" on which the Satan came before G-d is explained by the Sages to be a reference to 'Rosh Hashana' - the Day of Judgement, suggesting that the book of Job conveys a message to the nature of the suffering of humanity and its Judgement.

Many faiths and religions are troubled by evil and suffering, yet Judaism in particular ~~is~~ is constantly challenged by the existence of suffering which is caused by a G-d who is believed to be both Omnipotent and Omnibenevolent.

Some cultures hold the view that G-d is cruel and ~~uncaring~~ ^{uncaring} for example the Zoroastrians of ancient Iran believed in Dualism. Meaning, that there are two gods - a god of light and good and a god of darkness and bad.

However, Nachmanides (the Ramban) says that whilst negative views are expressed about G-d in the book of Job, the underlying position is that G-d is just and all-knowing, expressing the Jewish idea that the suffering of the righteous and an all-being G-d are perfectly compatible.

When Job first encounters loss, his initial reaction is "G-d has given and G-d has taken away" which is an unquestioning acceptance of G-d's will.

This response is echoed in the Talmud with Rabbi Meir's wife Beruriah, when one sabbath her two sons die. She comforted her distraught husband by quoting the book of Job: "G-d gave them to us, G-d has taken them back. Blessed be the name of G-d".

However, as the narrative continues and Job is

visited by his friends, this response and acceptance does not seem sufficient anymore, especially as Job is struck with his skin disease. Job searches for a deeper understanding of his suffering.

Job's first visit was from his friend Eliphaz, who justifies his suffering with a fundamental Jewish idea; Divine Retribution. This idea implies that Job must have sinned, therefore just as a father disciplines his child, so too Job must be deserving of punishment from G-d in order to be taught a lesson. This idea is expressed many times in the Bible, for example in Leviticus (26:15) G-d says: ~~And~~ "and if my statutes you reject... I will do unto you..."

The second visitor was Bildad who explains the process of self-refinement and elevation through suffering and hardship. Often when a person is forced to endure suffering, he finds within himself inner qualities of strength to cope, thus asserting his faith and enabling him to become a better person. For example, a woman who has children automatically feels more compassion and understanding towards a woman enduring the pain of childbirth.

There are many examples of great people in the Bible who were forced to find ways of coping

with their struggles, and perhaps their challenges were what melted them into greatness. For example Joseph who was sold as a slave by his brothers yet he rose to the challenge and became the great leader of Egypt, or King David who endured so much during his lifetime and was the great King of Israel, and through his pain he wrote the book of psalms which continues to bring comfort to people today.

There are living examples today of people who have used their hardships to strengthen themselves and others, by founding support groups for ~~the~~^{those} in similar circumstances.

Tzophar was Job's third visitor who explains that the will and judgement of G-d is unathomable. The way we humans define G-d's motives is not necessarily the way G-d does and therefore we cannot question them, nor ~~to~~ expect to try understand them. We must not doubt G-d's methods of running the world, but rather accept that G-d's ways are not our ways and we cannot know His ways.

Each of these three views are based on the underlying idea of "Hester Panim" - the "Hidden Face". G-d must hide Himself in the world so that it becomes more difficult to recognise Him and His

Kindness in the world ~~so~~ in order to test a human's true love for Him. This means that suffering is necessary in order to grant a person the freedom of choice, for if G-d was to shower us with only good, we would have no choice but to love Him. ~~with~~ with suffering a person may choose to reject G-d, as Job nearly did. This presents a person with a fair test; this is true free will.

~~the~~ Elihu is the last character to visit Job and he presents a more mystical ~~idea~~ analysis with the idea that suffering in this world is actually kindness coming from G-d. A person may have to be punished in order to account for his wrongdoings - measure for measure - but this could mean he will experience much reward and enjoyment in the world to come.

This can also be understood with the idea of 'Gigulim'; a person suffering because his soul is a reincarnation of someone who sinned in a previous existence. Therefore, by G-d making him suffer in this world he is being spared from suffering in the world to come, which would be undoubtedly much worse. As Elihu says - "He has distanced you... from that which has a narrow entrance...".

It is after Job has heard his visitor's perspectives on his suffering, that he is visited by G-d Himself in a storm. Admitted G-d's great glory and infinity Job realizes his insignificance and thereby reaches a sense of acceptance to all that has happened to him. He appreciates that G-d's ways are unpathable and he has no right to question them.

However, this is a superficial understanding and does not satisfy G-d, therefore G-d visits Job again causing him to respond in a different manner, one which is deeper and conveys essential truth.

G-d tells Job that when a person experiences suffering, it is a revelation of G-d's love from His true source and inner-will. The reason why it appears to be "bad" is because it stems from a closer, inner relationship with G-d, beyond a person's understanding. Therefore, what Job had perceived as "bad", was in fact extra goodness stemming from G-d's most deepest, inner source.

This level is extremely difficult to comprehend, yet there was a Talmudic sage named "Nachum Ish Gam Zu", meaning Nachum the man of "this is also", for any troubles he encountered he would automatically perceive as extra goodness from G-d and he would say "this too is for the good", with complete faith and joy.

This idea is also expressed in Chassidic philosophy by Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi in chapter twenty-six in his book 'Tanya'. He describes suffering as 'concealed good' stemming from G-d's more lofty level of inner-will and therefore when a person experiences hardships, it is a sign that G-d is reaching out to him from an inner place, a place of hiddenness, a higher level of goodness which is simply concealed because of its intensity.

This can be understood with the analogy of a doctor performing a complicated surgery. To an innocent ~~by~~ bystander, it appears that the doctor is abusing the defenceless patient with a knife and causing him intense pain. However, in reality, the "suffering" inflicted upon the patient is for his own benefit and may save his life.

The suffering endured by us in exile is painful and harsh too, yet all is kindness from G-d as a way of refining or "healing" us before the Redemption. Hardships are often referred to as the "birth pangs of Mashiach" for whilst the pain and anguish is overwhelming, just like childbirth, all is just a process, a test from G-d to help us ~~prepare~~ prepare ourselves for the coming of the Messiah.

It is after these events that Job has ultimately passed all his tests and reached a very high level of spirituality. Job says "I revile" - ~~me~~ (12:5) and he regards all materialistic and worldly matters with contempt and detachment, desiring only to remain spiritual and close to G-d. G-d tells Job that on the contrary, Job must live in the physical world, taking his ~~pr~~ prophetic and spiritual experiences with him, spreading goodness to others and throughout the world. G-d rewards Job by doubling his fortune and blessing him with more children. Job's life becomes full of activities again and Job feasts with family and friends, serving as a spiritual guide.

Judaism teaches that whilst life may bring tough experiences, the appropriate response is to rebuild one's life, always living with positivity and hope.

In conclusion I maintain that the book of Job certainly shows many ways to respond to suffering when challenges are thrown at you, and how to deal with sensitivity to someone in pain.

As G-d said to Job - "wisdom has double folds"; there is no conclusive answer to suffering ~~etc~~ in

that it cannot be defined and explained within the realms of finite human intellect.

However, the many responses to suffering that are extracted from the book of Job - such as self-refinement and elevation, ~~the~~ reward in the world to come, free ~~will~~^{will}, the Midden Pass, and more all show how the Book of Job certainly is a comprehensive theology to respond to the problem of evil and suffering, showing there is ^{some sort of} an answer, whilst expressing these classical Jewish views as well.

Paper Summary

Key Points to Remember:

- Do not ignore the question.
- A generic question is not best answered with a generic answer. The question is made up of two parts. The question itself and the generic phrase 'Examine and comment with reference to the topic you have investigated.' Answer the question.
- Use appropriate sources and, if possible, include recent scholarship.
- Well deployed material will show how well you understand your topic and how you are using your material to answer the question.
- Do not forget to comment on your material in relation to the question.
- Use your evidence to substantiate your argument.
- Comment on alternative views if you know them.
- Express your viewpoint clearly.
- Practice writing under timed conditions as part of your preparation.
- Do not spend too much time on your essay plan to the detriment of the essay itself.
- Write legibly.

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